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ANNEX 11

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
OUTGOING TELEGRAM
REVIEWED BY WOLF JR DATE 5/25/82
TOP SECRET
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September 8, 1947
2 pm

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AMEMBASSY,

LONDON. (No. 3883)

FOR THE AMBASSADOR FROM THE SECRETARY

Please take an early opportunity to see Bevin and tell him that since my return from Brazil I have been giving further careful consideration to the problems raised by his recent messages to me concerning the withdrawal of British troops from Greece and Italy. As he is aware we have proposed that the deposit of ratifications of the Italian treaty take place Sept 15. If this is agreed it will enable both British and US troops to be withdrawn from Italy at an earlier date than he had suggested.

With regard to the situation in Greece I fully recognize that Bevin had previously informed us of the Brit Govt's intention to withdraw its troops sometime this year. Nevertheless I am sure he will likewise agree that when this advance notice was given conditions in Greece were radically different from what they are today. Furthermore, at that time we had greater expectations that prompt action on the part of the United Nations would be able to put an end to this threat to Greece's independence and integrity. Since March, however, the situation has rapidly degenerated and Greece is seriously menaced.

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Although it is fully appreciated here that British troops in Greece are not able and indeed are not intended to withstand armed attack in force, nevertheless, their presence is regarded as symbolical of the determination of the Western democracies to insure the continued independence of the Greek state. For this reason they are a strong deterrent to attack in force against Greece and have a marked influence upon the internal Greek situation and a substantial effect on the morale of the Greek population. Furthermore, as you have already informed Mr. Bevin, their withdrawal would be interpreted as an abandonment of the US-UK joint responsibility at a very critical time, with probable repercussions throughout other parts of Europe.

As Mr. Bevin is aware the British Chiefs of Staff have made certain recommendations to the US Chiefs of Staff as to

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the timing of the withdrawal of British forces from Greece and as to increases in the Greek armed forces necessary to compensate for this withdrawal. At my request the US Joint Chiefs have discussed this matter with the British Staff Mission and have given careful consideration to the military consequences of an early withdrawal of British troops from Greece. The US Joint Chiefs are of the opinion that in the face of British withdrawal implementation of the aforesaid recommendations would be inadequate to assure the independence of Greece. The US Joint Chiefs have therefore not been able to accept these proposals as a solution to the present problem. They are further seriously concerned regarding the military implications of the British proposal. Such withdrawal would surely result, in their opinion, in a marked deterioration of the Anglo-American overall strategic position in the Mediterranean and might well provoke a critical situation in Greece itself. They have reached the conclusion that there appears to be no course of action open to the US which could fully offset the adverse effects of the withdrawal of British troops.

At present the US and Great Britain stand together in Greece on a common front against Communist aggression. Should the Brit Govt withdraw from this position, the mere act of withdrawal would create a distinct atmosphere of disruption and of heightened crisis.

With regard to Mr. Bevin's statement that he felt some uncertainty regarding the policy of the US Govt in the Middle East I am anxious to dispel any misunderstanding in this respect. (UKTEL 4743, Sept 1). I assume he had particular reference to US policy with respect to Brit position in that area. In that connection it may be said that fundamental cornerstone of our thinking is the maintenance of Britain's position to the greatest possible extent. The US counts heavily upon continued close British-American cooperation in the Middle East. How this can best be maintained requires extremely careful consideration in the light of developments in the Middle East as a whole, taking into account the popular sentiment in the countries of the area and the external pressures and influences which may be brought to bear upon them.

I believe our telegram no. 3800 of Aug 30, 2 p.m. should have reassured Brit Govt regarding our attitude toward mutual defense arrangements between Britain and Egypt. If not, you

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may again say in categoric terms that this Govt continues to desire the conclusion of satisfactory arrangements of this nature between Britain and Egypt.

I fully agree with Mr. Bevin's suggestion for a joint review by the US and UK of the whole position in the Middle East with a view to arriving at an understanding in regard to a common policy, and we are prepared to begin as soon as possible. The conversations, in my opinion, should be divided into two steps: First, on a military planning level to be arranged through the Chiefs of Staff and to take place in Washington and second, on a top political level at a place to be mutually agreed upon. With respect to latter, if Mr. Bevin attends UNGA, this would offer favorable opportunity.

Pending these talks I should, of course, hope that the British Govt will postpone any steps looking toward the withdrawal of troops from Greece.

MARSHALL

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